

FWP Commission Agenda Item Cover Sheet

Meeting Date: August 31, 2012

Agenda Item: Property Acquisition – Donation (Region 6)

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Preliminary Approval

Time for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background: A landowner has approached FWP about donating property to the department for wildlife conservation and public use. The property consists of 1,090 acres of deeded land in breaks habitat along the north shore of the Missouri River, approximately 13 miles southwest of Big Sandy (Figures 1-3). Adjacent to the property, there are 475 acres of public DNRC and BLM lands.

Nearly the entire property proposed for donation is native habitat, much of which is classified as Tier I habitat (i.e., mixed grass prairie, shrub-grassland, and riparian habitat). The grassland habitat above the breaks is primarily mixed-grass prairie dominated by western wheatgrass with small patches of Wyoming big sagebrush. Several branches of Spring Coulee traverse the property, comprising a mix of silver sagebrush grasslands, badlands, and greasewood flats. The property appears to provide good mule deer habitat and also supports antelope, sharp-tailed grouse, and a variety of nongame wildlife associated with mixed grass and shrub habitats.

Public Involvement Process & Results: None to date. With preliminary approval from the Commission, FWP staff will further research the property including its accessibility, habitat values, and management options. Based on further investigation, FWP may pursue this acquisition further by completing an environmental assessment and economic analysis including a public review period, and would ultimately seek final approval from the Commission.

Alternatives and Analysis: The only alternative would be to not accept the donation of this property.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: The landowner has made a generous offer to FWP and Montana citizens to maintain a portion of their land in public ownership for the benefit of fish and wildlife. FWP recommends the Commission endorse moving forward with evaluating the property for inclusion as a Wildlife Management Area.

Proposed Motion: I move the Commission give preliminary approval to FWP to conduct appropriate analysis and public review for accepting this land donation as a Wildlife Management Area.